Developing SMART Goals

Using the **SMART** acronym can help ensure that managers and employees share the same understanding of goals set during performance review conversations.

For example, a sample goal might be:

Keep our department's web page up-to-date.

There is a problem with this goal—what does "up to date" mean? How can the employee and manager be sure that they are working to the same standard? How can each of them know that the employee has met this goal?

A more effective goal would be:

The first Friday of every month, solicit updates and new material from our department's managers for the web page; publish this new material no later than the following Friday. Each time new material is published, review our department's web page for material that is out-of-date, and delete or archive that material.

(It is important to make sure that the manager and the employee know exactly which people are the managers to be contacted.)

The revised goal is:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

Specific

At a specific time solicit updates from a specific group of people, and at a specific time revise the web page

Measurable

Were updates solicited on schedule? Was the web page updated on schedule? These are both yes or no questions.

Achievable

This requires some conversation—are the updates too frequent? What should the employee do if managers fail to respond? What other time-sensitive work is this employee responsible for? With conversation, it should be possible to set a shared, achievable standard for updating the department's web page.

Relevant

The goal needs to tie into the employee's key responsibilities and be important to the mission of the department.

Time-bound

This sample goal doesn't end with a particular action or event but carries forward until the employee's next review, or until it is changed for other reasons. Some goals might be time-bound by setting a deadline for the project or task to be completed. For instance, "By March 31, include photos of the new graduate students on our web page."

As you consider goals, you might want to answer the following questions to be sure that you are creating SMART goals:

- What is specific about the goal?

- Is the goal measurable? (How will you know the goal has been achieved?)

- Is the goal achievable?

- Is the goal relevant to performance expectations or professional development?

- Is the goal time-bound? (How often will this task be done? Or, by when will this goal be accomplished?)